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ART. X.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

- 1.—*The Atlantic Souvenir; a Christmas and New Year's Offering.*
Philadelphia. Carey and Lea. 1826. pp. 353.

THIS is a beautiful little book, in imitation of the *year books*, which have so long been made up in the same style in Germany, and lately in England. It differs from them, however, by being entirely original in its matter, and of course depending for its value on American artists.

The German works of this kind, which we have seen, were composed principally of extracts from the poets of their own country, the popular ballads and tales new versified, or translations from foreign literature. The growing taste in Germany for Shakspeare is shown, by the very copious drafts made on him in these works; and we observed in a book of the kind, printed at Leipsic in 1821, some translations, of an accuracy, occasionally equal to that of Foscolo, in rendering Sterne's 'Still, slavery, still,' &c, which he signifies in Italian to mean, 'Slavery, *though* thou art peaceful,' &c.

It is an agreeable thing to see all the occurring festivals of society partake something of a literary character. It appears to be a return to the delicate taste of the ancients in this respect, who marked every public or private era of importance with some joyous testimonial. If the law did not always provide, that an occasional ceremony should be observed with the signs of rejoicing, the custom did; and the warrior, who returned 'brow bound with the oak' by *right*, found his friends crowned with roses at their friendly banquet.

The more practical habits of modern society, lead us to be more indifferent than they, to all but that which is real and effectual; and it is not certain, whether we gain by the change. It seems certain, however, that the domestic and social ties were more tenderly prized with the ancients than with us; and a vast part of their history is interested in events, which arose from this feeling, where modern annals would give the reader an account of a stormy debate, or a cabinet intrigue. One of the French wits avers it to be impossible to found the plot of a tragedy on a Grecian story, except by calling into requisition 'the eternal family of Pelops,' with whom it is clear the French stage must be by this time pretty familiar. The taste, which tends to make all domestic intercourse as delightful as possible, by not merely

employing the arts as the ministers or trophies of pride and wealth, but as the ornaments of affectionate intercourse, is excellent. If it is our ambition to equal the ancients in the simplicity and freedom of our institutions, it may also be worth while to divest ourselves as far as possible of the heartless directness, which the competition of modern society produces. There is little danger, in our country, of the study of what may be called the minor branches of the fine arts being carried too far. With so extensive a commercial capital, and the more than Agrarian laws, which regulate the vast territories of the West, there will not be soon the crowded population, which is pleased or supported by shows and toys. A man who, in Paris or Vienna, would live by gilt paper and pasteboard, in America would take his axe and rifle, or if less adventurous, set up a *store*, or command a steamboat. But, with all this, our countrymen are beginning to grow a little fastidious, and demand something like refinement; and in a community, that can support the Italian Opera in a full corps, there must be a real or affected taste for some of the fine arts. This taste, as regards the Opera, has been, we suspect, a little factitious in New York; for we observed the papers filled for some time before its opening with explanations of the common musical business, and exhortations to the public to be pleased with the Garcias.

The little book before us does not need any such preparation to be liked. It is a beautifully printed duodecimo, executed with great neatness, and very prettily embellished. It contains some charming views of American and foreign scenery. There is a beautiful view of the burying place of Père la Chaise at sunset, a view of Athens, of the Bay of Naples, and the Falls of Montmorenci, with other decorations. But the value of this little volume does not depend on these. The literary execution of its matter is well finished, though the different articles of it are very unequal. The 'Eve of St John, a tale of the Grecian Islands,' is the first in order, and among the best of the pieces. It turns on the oppressive barbarity of the Ottoman rulers, towards the interesting people inhabiting these islands. A Grecian maiden, *Adiante*, though warned by an omen, fearful for a lover, on the eve of the feast of St John, betroths herself to *Demetrius*, who, it seems, 'in stature was tall and as straight as a palm,' easy in his carriage, active and graceful in his walk, fiery in the eye, and impatient of insult to the last degree. He was eloquent, poetical, romantic, enterprising, and a lover of the arts. With these qualifications, it is not wonderful that he won the fair *Adiante* to forget the mysterious omen, by which she had been warned that their love would be fatal, and that they were not destined to be united. But

the course of their loves is soon found anything but smooth. A new Vaivode, or governor, arrives from Constantinople, and, learning the beauty of the bride of Demetrius, insists on seeing her in a manner the most insulting, and with purposes dark and wicked. In short, the marriage of the young Grecians is subsequently interrupted by this tyrant and his train, who murder the youth. Adiante, also, is wounded, and dies in the conflict. The story is well told, and exhibits in strong colors the brutal tyranny of the Turks over the Greeks in their power.

The piece, entitled the 'Catholic Iroquois,' by the author of Redwood, is a beautiful and touching little tale, and worthy of the pen of that writer. Others might be selected, both in prose and poetry, that are creditable to their authors, although a few have gained admittance, whose claims to such a distinction we have not been able to discover. The plan of this work is calculated to have so good an effect on the taste of the community, that we hope the publishers will be encouraged to continue it annually. Their aim should be, as far as possible, to enlist the best writers in different parts of the country, to procure articles on American topics, and designs of American scenery. It will thus have a character and a value peculiar to itself, and not to be found in any other works of a similar kind.

2.—*A View of the Constitution of the United States of America.*
By WILLIAM RAWLE. Philadelphia. 1825. Svo. pp. 347.

THE constitution of the United States was, in many particulars, a new experiment in politics. It was the first government, and, at the time of its creation, the only one in which the principle of *representation* was extended as well to the executive and judicial departments, as to the legislative. In other nations, where political liberty has been enjoyed to a certain degree, the principle of representation has been either abandoned altogether, or confined to the selection of those who were to make the laws; while in the execution and interpretation of the laws, the people beheld a power created without their consent, and existing beyond their control.

In Rome, indeed, it was otherwise; for while the consuls and prætors were chosen by the people and accountable to them, the senate was a hereditary body, whose decrees the popular officers were in general bound to execute. But in the United States, every officer in every department of the government is a representative of the people; acting by the authority of the people,